

Message Text

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13-12

ACTION IO-11

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AID FOR AFR/CWA

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TAGS: OCON, UNESCO, OAU, OC, SEDU, EAID, XA

SUBJ: UNESCO CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

REF : (A) LAGOS 1158 (B) STATE 15320

1. SUMMARY. CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION SPONSORED BY UNESCO, THE OAU AND THE ECA ADJOURNED AS SCHEDULED FEB 4. ON LAST DAY, DELEGATES ADOPTED CONFERENCE REPORT AND TWENTY-NINE RESOLUTIONS DEALING WITH EDUCATION IN AFRICA. END SUMMARY.

2. ON LAST DAY, CONFERENCE ADOPTED RESOLUTION WHICH (1) EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT CERTAIN COUNTRIES HAVE FAILED PAY ALL OR PART OF THEIR UNESCO ASSESSMENTS; (2) NOTED WITH INDIGNATION CAMPAIGN OF CALUMNY AND DENIGRATION WAGED AGAINST UNESCO AND ALSO ACTS OF VIOLENCE PERPETRATED AGAINST ITS HEADQUARTERS; (3) DREW ATTENTION TO NEED TO FOSTER TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RIGHT IN PRESENT SITUATION; (4) DENOUNCED PRESSURE BROUGHT AGAINST UNESCO AND ACTS OF INTIMIDATION AND AGRESSION AGAINST ITS STAFF; AND (5) CALLED ON MEMBER STATES PAY DUES. RESOLUTION, WHICH INTRODUCED BY
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NIGERIA, BURUNDI, LESOTHO, ETHIOPIA, EGYPT, ALGERIA, TANZANIA,

MADAGASCAR, MAURITANIA AND TOGO, REPRESENTED CONFERENCE'S RESPONSE TO UNESCO STAFF AND BUDGET CUTS BROUGHT ABOUT BY FAILURE ALL MEMBER STATES PAY ASSESSMENTS. NO FINGERS POINTED AT ANY PARTICULAR NATION.

3. RESOLUTIONS, MANY OF WHICH ARE OVERLAPPING ("COMPLIMENTARY" OR "FURTHER REFINING" IN CONFERENCE JARGON) IN GENERAL CALL FOR AN EXAMINATION, REFORM AND OVERHAUL OF AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND CURRICULA WITH VIEW TO TEACHING MORE PRACTICAL COURSES FOR PRESENT DAY AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND RELATING COURSE CONTENT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN STATES. THERE IS UNMISTAKEABLE TREND IN SUPPORT OF MORE VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND THE PROMOTION OF USE OF MANUAL SKILLS; AGRICULTURE EMPHASIZED. CONFERENCE ALSO BOUGHT CONCEPT "BASIC EDUCATION" WHICH IS A PACKAGE OF MINIMUM EDUCATION FALLING SHORT OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN WESTERN SENSE. THIS "BASIC EDUCATION" IS TO BE TAUGHT NOT ONLY BY FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS BUT ALSO BY "NON-FORMAL" MEANS AND THUS AVAILABLE TO MORE PEOPLE, BOTH YOUNGSTERS AND ADULTS. MAJORITY REPRESENTATIVES AT CONFERENCE APPEARED TO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT UNIVERSAL EDUCATION (PRIMARY OR SECONDARY) IN WESTERN SENSE IS NOT REALIZABLE GOAL IN AFRICA OVER SHORT OR MEDIUM TERM; NEITHER THE REQUISITE FINANCIAL OR MONETARY RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE. THEY, THEREFORE, LOOKING FOR LESS EXPENSIVE AND MORE EASILY ACHIEVABLE GOAL--BASIC EDUCATION CONCEPT APPEARED TO BE ANSWER FOR THIS CONFERENCE. THERE WERE ALSO CALLS FOR MAKING SCHOOLS MORE SELF SUFFICIENT ("UNITS OF PRODUCTION") THUS REDUCING GOVERNMENTAL OUTLAYS. GOVERNMENTS ARE AWARE OF STAGGERING EXPENSE EDUCATION INVOLVES AND ARE SEARCHING FOR QUICKER, CHEAPER WAY TO RESPOND TO INSISTENT INTERNAL DEMANDS FOR GOVERNMENT PROVIDED EDUCATION.

4. THERE WAS ALSO MARKED NATIONALIST MOOD AT CONFERENCE. CALLS FOR "DECOLONIZATION" OF MINDS AND EDUCATION SYSTEMS, AFRICANIZATION OF CURRICULA AND USE OF LOCAL AFRICAN LANGUAGES AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS WERE PERSISTENT. THOSE FEW DELEGATIONS (USUALLY LED BY SENEGAL) WHO ATTEMPTED BUCK THE TIDE FOUND THEMSELVES ON SHORT END OF STICK ON EVERY VOTE. DESPITE CONFERENCE'S RECOGNITION OF NEED FOR EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE, THERE WAS RESENTMENT OF PAST DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN ADVICE AND AN ASSUMPTION THAT NEEDED RESOURCES WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE FROM INTERNAL SOURCES. ONE RESOLUTION URGED MEMBER STATES TO FIRST EXPLORE ALL LOCAL AVENUES BEFORE TURNING TO FOREIGN AID, AND THAT IT SHOULD BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE RECIPIENT, NOT THE DONOR, WHO DETERMINES WHAT FORM AND HOW FOREIGN AID IS USED.

5. OTHER RESOLUTIONS CALLED FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTINENTAL CLEARING HOUSE FOR DISSEMINATION EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION BETWEEN STATES; AND FOR UNESCO TO HELP ESTABLISH PUBLISHING HOUSES ON REGIONAL BASIS TO PRINT TEXTBOOKS (IN LOCAL LANGUAGES AS WELL AS ENGLISH AND FRENCH). INCREASED UTILIZATION OF ASSOCIATION AFRICAN

UNIVERSITIES ALSO URGED AS MEANS EXCHANGING TECHNOLOGY, IDEAS AND EDUCATION PERSONNEL.

6. FOR MOST PART, CONFERENCE BUSINESSLIKE AND CONCERNED WITH EDUCATION. ON LAST DAY, CONFERENCE PRESIDENT, NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER EDUCATION, COL. A. A. ALI, ADROITLY MOVED DELEGATES THROUGH PROCESS OF ADOPTION REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS AND SMOOTHLY ENDED A HARSH EXCHANGE BETWEEN BENIN (FOR) AND SENEGALESE (AGAINST) DELEGATES OVER WHETHER SCHOOLS SHOULD INCLUDE WORK AS PART OF CURRICULA. (THEY SHOULD ACCORDING TO CONFERENCE REPORT.)

7. IN CLOSING CEREMONY, NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONDED TO CONFERENCE CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNESCO BY MAKING HALF-MILLION DOLLAR INTEREST FREE LOAN TO THAT ORGANIZATION. THIS GESTURE HIGHLIGHTED A POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE FACTOR WITHIN AFRICA-- THE GROWING DISPARITY BETWEEN THE POOREST AND THE RELATIVELY RICHER NATIONS. WHILE CONFERENCE ON THIS OCCASION NOTED SOME COUNTRIES HAD MORE RESOURCES AVAILABLE THAN OTHERS AND CALLED FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE MOST NEEDY, THERE WAS NO OPEN HOSTILITY ON PART OF POORER TOWARD RICHER. HOWEVER, IN SPEECHES AND REMARKS BY DELEGATES, IT OBVIOUS THAT COUNTRIES LIKE NIGERIA WERE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS THAN BY FINANCIAL NEEDS. OTHER COUNTRIES, LESS WELL OFF, SPOKE OFTEN ABOUT FINANCIAL AS WELL AS HUMAN RESTRICTIONS ON DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS.

8. FINAL REPORT AND DOCUMENTS WILL BE SUBMITTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. UNESCO STAFF HERE HAD GREAT DIFFICULTY COPING WITH TRANSLATIONS, POWER OUTAGES AND SHORTAGE OF PERSONNEL. NOT ALL SPEECHES WERE PRINTED OR DISTRIBUTED BY SECRETARIAT. HOWEVER, COPIES OF CONFERENCE DRAFT REPORT, RESOLUTIONS AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS WERE OBTAINED.

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